

BLACK DIAMOND

Seven awesome New England rides



BONANZA

A full-page photograph of a male mountain biker riding through a wooded trail. He is wearing a yellow short-sleeved jersey, black shorts, a white helmet with black graphics, and a backpack. He is leaning forward, navigating a section of the trail with fallen branches. In the background, a calm river flows through a forest with green foliage.

"The best time to ride New England singletrack is right now," states the New England Mountain Bike Association's Philip Keys. "From September through November the riding is absolutely the best; it's not quite as hot, and the foliage is absolutely spectacular. All of the leaves being on the ground puts you in a different dimension."

"You have to watch out for skeeters here. In northern New England, there are black flies and ticks. Just use some bug repellent—a Deet or lemon eucalyptus repellent."

Continues Philip, "NEMBA has 18 chapters, with mountain bike people and rides everywhere. There are a thousand-plus rides per year, many on the top trails you're about to read about here. Plus, there's a whole slew of other rides that are equally epic. So come and check out our trails. It's mostly fairly tight singletrack, some rooty, some dialed in. Hook up with someone from a local chapter and receive the full chaperone treatment on your very next ride. Support us as we build more trails and protect our riding access."

Heavy guard: The trail around Huntington State Park may look mellow, so why is that guy wearing pads? Things turn more challenging as riders head into the deep woods.

BLACK DIAMOND BONANZA

NEMBA's TOP SINGLETRACK PICKS A SAMPLING OF SINGLETRACK PARADISE

● Call up www.nemba.org and get dialed in with maps, locations and ride dates on New England's best trails, along with its best mountain bike people. For a teaser, here are some of Philip Keyes' New England favorites. ●

ATTITASH MOUNTAIN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE GRAVITY HOT SPOT

● Attitash is located on Route 302 in Bartlett, New Hampshire, about ten miles northwest of North Conway, New Hampshire. It offers seven miles of lift-served singletrack.

Access is easy. Drive on Route 302 and you can't miss it. Attitash Mountain is sitting right off the road. Pull into the parking lot across the

street from the base area, use the tunnel to cross under the road, and you're at the ticket office.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Attitash is a steep and technical ski hill, and the riding is no different. The majority of the trails are singletrack, featuring natural drops, steep rollers, and tight corners. You are constantly working while descending; there is no time to rest.

THE BEST SETUP: You can ride nearly any bicycle as long as you ride smooth. The best setup is a full-suspension bike with at least six inches of travel, front and rear. We also recommend Michelin tires. The DH 16 2.5 is the favorite. Other people may use a DH 32 2.8 in the front. Leg armor is a good idea with flats or clipless, as there are many opportunities to slip a pedal.

LOCAL BIKE SHOPS: We have our own rental and repair shop on site. It's called the Pedaling Bear. We can handle most repairs on the spot, but some parts we may not have on hand. We carry parts mostly to service our rental fleet. The rental fleet consists of Ironhorse Yakuza Kumichos. A bicycle rental is \$30 for three hours, or \$60 for the day. All rentals include a helmet, plus leg and arm armor can be had for an additional \$6 per day. ●

BEAR BROOK IN NEW HAMPSHIRE MOUNTAINS, PONDS AND BROOKS

● At 10,000 acres, Bear Brook is New Hampshire's largest developed state park. It is located in Allenstown off Route 28, just south of Concord. It consists of 40 miles of varied trails, including an abundance of singletrack.

There are many access points at Bear Brook, with three major parking lots. The entrance to the park is on NH 28, three miles north of its junction with U.S. 3. Park in an unpaved lot located one-third of a mile up the access road on the right, or head further into the park. There is parking farther down at the hiker-biker lot near the archery range. Up Podunk Road there is also another lot at Hayes Field. At the toll booth, when you pay your fee, they will provide a map which shows all these locations.

WHAT TO EXPECT: With its varied terrain, Bear Brook is a favorite of many in New Hampshire. There are three small mountains (some might call them large hills) within the park, along with a couple of ponds and multiple brooks. Trails are typical East Coast singletrack, with lots of rocks and roots.

The most technical trails are the steep Catamount Hill Trail, the famous Hedgehog Ledge with its staircases (both going down and climbing back up), and the rocky descending trail, Carr Ridge, with a great log staircase at the end. A couple of the favorite trails of the park are the Bear Brook Trail, which parallels its namesake, and the awesome Little Bear trail, with its blazing-fast root-infested downhill. A beginner rider can easily make a loop within his abilities and an expert rider can take a ride consisting of 30-plus miles and 2000-plus feet of climbing through some burly terrain. Bear Brook is anything but flat. A longer ride can be made going south using snowmobile trails that connect with Tower Hill in about nine miles, along with Fomba in around ten miles from the border of the park. The land outside the park is private, so stay on the trails.

THE BEST SETUP: You can ride your 20-year-old hardtail at Bear Brook or choose up to a six-inch, all-mountain rig. Big Hit bikes show themselves from time to time, but are a bit much for most to pedal around in the park. Bring bug spray, even if you don't need it.

LOCAL BIKE SHOPS: Revolution Cycles in Concord, S&W Sports in Concord, Goodale's Bike in Concord, and Hooksett, and Naults Cyclery in Manchester. ●

BRADBURY MOUNTAIN STATE PARK IN MAINE A FAST AND FRIENDLY GREEN

● In operation as a state park since the early '60s, in the last ten years Bradbury Mountain has been expanded into a mountain bike park. The main chapter for NEMBA is very involved in making it the best possible mountain bike hot spot. The riding is very organized at Bradbury, and all of the trails are marked. It takes \$3.50 per day to ride in a Maine State Park. Family passes are available for \$60, which allow entry for up to five people per vehicle. The Family pass also allows entry into the other five state parks in Maine.

Bradbury Mountain State Park is located in Pownal, Maine. To get there from north or south on I-95, take the Durham exit. When you drive off the interstate, there is a sign to Bradbury five miles from the exit. There's a dirt parking lot with primitive accommodations at the base of Bradbury Mountain. There is no running water.

WHAT TO EXPECT: There are 19 miles of mostly beginner to intermediate singletrack. Some is advanced, but nothing too serious. The trail condi-



Line options: Well designed trails offer options. Newbie riders can take the low road while experienced riders can hit it hard and take the high road. The Vietnam trails are well designed.

tions are usually dry hardpack with roots and rocks. It is very, very fast riding over rolling terrain and challenging, 100-foot climbs. In other words, a beautiful ride.

You will also find a bunch of log bridges there. They are 18 inches wide and two to three feet off the ground—moderate difficulty. It's a good way to hone skills for the tougher stunts.

You can ride year 'round here, as long as it's not over a foot of snow. In the springtime it's wet, and the rangers shut down the trails that don't have good drainage. It's fully dry from July to November, and it's the best time to ride Bradbury Mountain.

In early spring to the end of June, expect mosquitoes. There are also black flies there. A lot of the guys use Ben's 100 with Deet.

THE BEST SETUP: A good cross-country bike, either a hardtail or three- to four-inch suspension bike, is just fine. We actually see people out there in spandex. There are a few who use shin guards, but it's really not necessary here.

For the springtime, run a tire with

Redding lies sixty miles northeast of New York City and fifty miles southwest of Hartford and is accessed by State Routes 6, 53, and 58, and Interstate 84 and the Merritt Pkwy. Its neighboring towns are Bethel, Danbury, Brookfield and Newtown. Official parking is off Sunset Road in the lot with the statues of the bear and the wolves. Other parking is one mile north off old Dodgingtown Road.

The area is very scenic, with lakes, glacial features, and a variety of forest habitats. Connecticut NEMBA has been putting a lot of effort into Huntington during the last year and it is really showing. There is some fantastic new singletrack popping up quite often.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Huntington State Park is an 800-acre park with quite a variety of riding: singletrack, doubletrack, some rocky stuff, a couple of gnarly downs, and a drop or two. (Nothing big, just nice-looking, smooth drops.) CT NEMBA just completed building the Rock and Roll Trail, over a mile of tight, twisty, highly technical singletrack designed to be fun and sustainable.

THE BEST SETUP:

Everyone from families to experienced riders can find something to suit their riding styles. All types of bikes work here! The local CT NEMBA (www.ctnemba.org) leads

numerous rides at Huntington State Park, and throughout Connecticut for that matter, and is the group that is creating more riding opportunities in the state. Two other high quality websites, www.bikerag.com and www.crankfire.com, have good maps and descriptions of Huntington SP, along with a ride post in their forums.

LOCAL BIKE SHOPS: Bethel Cycle, Bethel, Bicycle Goodie Shop, Bethel, and Cycle Fitness, Monroe. ●

KINGDOM TRAILS IN VERMONT VOTED NUMBER ONE BY YOU

● The Kingdom Trail System is located in the village of East Burke in the heart of the region of Vermont known as the Northeast Kingdom. The trails are managed by a not-for-profit organization and maintained by staff and volunteers. It consists of 115 miles of connected singletrack and doubletrack that wind through fields and forests in a quintessential calendar Vermont setting. The entire system is mapped, marked and signed. One half of the system is located adjacent to the Burke Mountain Ski Area. The area is a non-motorized multiple use system known for its extremely buff and fast singletrack. Kingdom Trails has been named by several national publications as the best mountain bike destination in New England.



open tread and one that doesn't pack up with soft dirt. As soon as it dries out, switch to a fast-rolling tire. Pick models with tough sidewalls. A lot of the rocks are granite base and jagged and will easily slice a lightweight sidewall.

LOCAL BIKE SHOPS: Bath, Bike & Ski is just down the road in Bath, a 15-minute ride by bike. L.L. Bean has a bike shop and they are only ten minutes away, off the same exit as for Bradbury Mountain. Sebago Outfitters is 20 minutes away in Windham. ●

HUNTINGTON STATE PARK IN CONNECTICUT NEW ENGLAND'S FANTASY ISLAND

● Collis P. Huntington State Park is located in southwestern Connecticut in the picturesque town of Redding.



Hard work: Expect New England's trails to be mostly singletrack, featuring natural drops, steep rollers and tight corners.